

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 3450

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, MX

SUBJ: PRESS COVERAGE CRITICAL OF MEXICAN NARCOTIC SITUATION

S/NM FOOR AMBASSADOR VANCE

DEA FOR EOI - CUSACK

SUMMARY: APRIL 21 EXCELSIOR (INFLUENTIAL) FRONT-PAGED STORY FROM NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE DEALING WITH HEROIN AND COCAIN TRAFFICE INTO U.S. SAME STORY PICKED UP BY LOCAL ENGLISH-LANGUAGE RADIO STATION IN ITS MORNING ROUND-UP OF LOCAL NEWS. ARTICLE BY NICHOLAS GAGE (WHO VISITED EMBASSY TWO MONTHS AGAO), IS APPARENTLY A MIXTURE OF WASHINGTON SOURCES, PLUS INFORMATION GLEANED IN MEXICO CITY. IT DEVOTES CONSIDERABLE SPACE TO THE COCAINE TRAFFIC FROM LATIN AMERICA. BUT WHAT CAPTURED HEADLINES HERE WAS PORTION DEVOTED TO MEXICAN HEROIN, AND ALLEGATIONS THAT U.S. DRUG AUTHORITIES HAVE LIST OF 70 MEXICAN "BIG FISH", AMONG THEM "A HIGH OFFICIAL OF AN IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT MINISTRY." THE MEXICAN ATTORNEY GENERAL HAS ALREADY CALLED AMB. JOVA TO EXPRESS STRONG CONCERN. EMD SUMMARY.

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1. AN INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PARAGRAPHS FOLLOWS:

A. THE HEADLINES: "MEXICO, THE PRINCIPAL PROVIDER OF HEROIN, SAYS THE US POLICE. OFFICIALS IN THE LIST OF NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. THE VIRTUAL IMPUNITY OF MANY LATIN AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS. THE CAMPAIGN HERE, HEADED BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL HAS BEEN INEFFECTIVE. WITHOUT GIVING NAMES, THEY STATE THAT THERE IS CORRUPTION AMONG THE INVESTIGATORS." BY NICHOLAS GAGE OF THE NEW YORK TIMES.

B. NEW YORK APRIL 20. THE NORTH AMERICAN NARCOTICS POLICE HAVE A LIST OF 70 IMPORTANT NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS IN MEXICO, ONE OF WHICH IS A HIGH OFFICIAL IN AN IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT MINISTRY. MEXICO HAS ALREADY REPLACED FRANCE AS THE PRINCIPAL SUPPLIER OF HEROIN TO THE NORTH AMERICAN MARKET; IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, THE ENTRY OF MEXICAN HEROIN INTO THE U.S. HAS INCREASED 60 PERCENT. (THE WRITER PROBABLY MEANS IT NOW AMOUNTS TO 60 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL US MARKET.)

C. IT IS KNOWN THAT SOME HIGH MEXICAN POLICE CHIEFS ARE BECOMING MILLIONAIRES IN THIS WAY. THERE ARE OFFICIALS WHO, WHEN THEY ARE TRANSFERRED FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER, SELL TO THEIR SUCCESSOR THE LIST OF NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS WHO PAY A FIXED QUOTA. THERE ARE ALSO POLICE WHO DO NOT ACCEPT BRIBES, BUT ARREST THE TRAFFICKERS AND LATER TAKE THEIR MONEY; THIS PRACTICE IS CALLED "THE TURNING".

D. NOW, MEXICO PRODUCES 15 TONS OF OPIUM ANNUALLY, WHICH IS THE BASE FROM WHICH HEROIN IS MADE. THE OPIUM IS GROWN IN THOUSANDS OF PLANTATIONS IN SINALOA, DURANGO, SONORA AND GUERRERO.

E. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF MEXICO, PEDRO OJEDA PAULLADA, SAID THAT THUS FAR THIS YEAR THERE HAVE BEEN 6,000 PLANTATIONS DESTROYED AND ANOTHER 2,000

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DISCOVERED. BUT THIS EFFORT HAS NOT STOPPED THE PRODUCTION OF DRUGS. AS SOON AS ONE PLANTATION IS DESTROYED, THE FARMERS BEGIN ANOTHER, USUALLY ON FEDERAL LAND, IN THE MOUNTAINS WHERE HELICOPTERS CANNOT LAND.

*. THE REPRESSION OF THE NARCOTICS TRAFFIC IS ONLY ONE OF THE FUNCTIONS CARRIED OUT BY A FEDERAL

POLICE FORCE OF 340 MEN, LED BY 20 COMMANDANTS. "IN MEXICO, IT IS THE SAME AS IN THE OLD WEST; IF THE SHERIFF WAS GOOD THERE WERE GOOD RESULTS. IF NOT...", SAYS ROBERT EYMAN, DIRECTOR IN MEXICO OF THE DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION.

G. THE U.S. AUTHORITIES CONSIDER THAT AMONG THE TWENTY MEXICAN FEDERAL POLICE COMMANDANTS THERE ARE "SOME FOUR GOOD SHELWFFS," OTHERS ARE INDIFFERENCE AND THERE ARE STILL OTHERS WHO HAVE MADE THEMSELVES MILLIONAIRES, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THEY ONLY ARE PAID 6,250 PESOS (D500 US) PER MONTH. OJEDA PAULLADA IS SUPPORTED BY COMMANDANTS SUCH AS SALVADOR DEL TORO AND ISMAEL DIAZ LAREDO, TO WHOM HE GIVES SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS. HE ALSO PERIODICALLY CHANGES THE ASSIGNMENT OF THE COMMANDANTS, IN ORDER TO PREVENT THEM BECOMING TOO FRIENDLY WITH THE NARCOOICS TRAFFICERS.

HM NONETHELESS, MANY OF THE PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE DRG TRAFFIC HAVE POWER. NOT ONLY DO THE POLICE PROTECT THEM, BUT ALSO SOME HIGH OFFICIALS. IN FACT, SOME DRUG TRAFFICKERS HAVE IMPORTANT POSITIONS IN THE GOVERNMENT. THE NORTH AMERICAN POLICE HAVE A LIST OF 70 "FAT FISH", ONE OF WHICH IS A HIGH OFFICIAL IN AN IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT MINISTRY.

I. OJEDA PAULLADA TRIES TO COMBAT THE CORRUPTION; IN SOME STATES HE HAS REMOVED CORRUPT OFFICIALS; HE ARRANGES THAT THE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS RECEIVE SEVERE PRISON SENTENCES AND HAS CREATED A TRAINING SCHOOL IN ORDER TO RAISE THE PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY OF THE FEDERAL POLICE.

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J. BUT UP TO NOW, THE EFFORTS OF THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT AFFECTED THE HEROIN PRODUCTION; MEXICO IS ALSO A COUNTRY OF TRANSIT FOR COCAINE EXPORTED FROM SOUTH AMERICA TO THE UNITED STATES.

2. COMMENT:

A) NOCHOLAS GAGE WAS RECOMMENDED TO US BY WASHINGTON AS A JOURNALIST WHO PLANNED A "HELPFUL" ARTICLE ON THE MEXICAN NARCOTICS PROBLEM. ALTHOUGH HE APPEARS TO HAVE GOTTEN SOME OF HIS SENSITIVE INFORMATION FROM WASHINGTON SOURCES, THE FACT THAT HE INTERVIEWED EMBASSY AND DEA OFFICIALS IN MEXICO PUTS US IN RATHER EMBARRASSING POSITION VIS A VIS THE

GOM. WE NOW KNOW THAT GAGE FINALLY SUCCEEDED IN HIS EFFORTS TO INTERVIEW THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, ACCOMPLISHING THIS BY TELEPHONE FROM WASHINGTON.

B) OBVIOUSLY THE MOST TROUBLESOME PARTS OF ARTICLE WERE ALLEGATION ABOUT 70 "BIG FISH", INCLUDING "HIGH OFFICIAL OF IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT MINISTRY", AS WELL AS STATEMENT THAT ONLY 4 OUT OF 20 COMMANDANTS WERE ANY GOOD. REGARDING FORMER, THIS SORT OF NON-SPECIFIC CHARGE LEAVES US OPEN TO DEMANDS THT THE OFFICIAL BE NAMED. MORE IMPORTANT, IT COULD BE USED BY POLITICAL OPPONENTS OF OJEDA PAULLADA AND HIS PATRON MOYA PALENCIA (WHO IS CURRENT FRONT-RUNNER IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE), TO CHARGE UNDUE INTERFERENCE BY US (AND BY INTFERENCE,UNDUE TOLERANCE OF IT BY OJEDA AND MOYA). THIS APPARENTLY VERY MUCH ON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S MIND. IN HIS CALLL TO AMBASSADOR, HE CITED ELECTION YEAR SENSITIVITES AS ONE OF HIS SERIOUS CONCERNS.

C) WE PLAN MAKE NO STATEMENT REGARDING THIS ARTICLE, FOR THE MOMENT REFERRING ALL ENQUIRIES TO WASHINGTON. AMBASSADOR JOVA WILL BE IN TOUCH AGAIN WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL, AND HAS PROPOSED THAT R.D. EYMAN TO TO AG'S OFFICE TO DISCUSS MATTER FURTHER. (ANOUTHER SORE POINT WAS THAT USE OF EYMAN'S NAME IN ARTICLE MADE AG THINK THAT EYMAN WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT IN FACT GAGE OBTAINED ELSEWHERE.)
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